

Virginia Attitude Eased On Negroes at Dinner

RICHMOND, Va., April 17 (AP)—The Virginia State Chamber of Commerce took the view today it is not going to get upset if Virginia-born Negroes show up at its big dinner party May 17.

"I feel sure they will be received courteously and seated for dinner," said Verbon E. Kemp, the chamber's executive director.

Mr. Kemp made that observation in an interview about the dinner the chamber is giving for distinguished Virginians to promote the 350th anniversary of the first English settlement at Jamestown Island.

Mr. Kemp added that as far as his authority extends he feels sure the treatment accorded Negroes on the invitation list will be courteous if any choose to show up at the dinner which was planned as an all-white party. The ultimate decision as to procedure, he added, lies with the chamber directors.

Three Received Bids

At the latest count invitations were extended to three native Virginia Negroes—Dr. Clifton B. Powell, New York physician and publisher; St. Clair Drake, a professor at Roosevelt University in Chicago; and Mrs. Ella P. Stewart of Toledo, Ohio.

Chamber officials, noting that the invitations had slipped through a careful screening process, hastily notified all three that their invitations had been withdrawn. Apologies were extended for any inconveniences or embarrassment caused by the incident.

Mrs. Stewart readily acceded to the withdrawal and said she felt "Virginia has already been embarrassed enough by its attitude." She added she didn't want to attend and be embarrassed personally.

At the outset of the incident Dr. Powell and Mr. Drake said they expected to attend the dinner unless Gov. Stanley rescinded the invitations personally. Gov. Stanley, who gave the chamber permission to use his name as co-host of the dinner, was shunted all inquiries back to the chamber.

Dr. Powell Won't Attend

Last night Dr. Powell, publisher of the Amsterdam News in New York's Harlem, reversed himself and said he would not attend the dinner.

In notifying Gov. Stanley and the State chamber of his decision, Dr. Powell said it is "definitely clear to all concerned that your decision of my invitation is because of my race."

There was no indication that Mr. Drake would alter his plans to attend the dinner.

A Congressman from Ohio wrote a letter of protest to the Governor apparently before he learned an invitation had been sent also to Prof. Drake. Representative Ashley, Democrat of Ohio, said the invitations over Mr. Stanley's name was an earned tribute to Mrs. Stewart and Dr. Powell.

"The peremptory withdrawal of these invitations can only be considered a direct and deliberate assault upon the dignity of two outstanding Americans," he wrote.

Chamber officials, it was learned, had considered making no mention of the errors in the list when they were first discovered and to go ahead as though it had been planned that way.

The Governor also was represented as considering for a while that this might be the best course. Then the decision was reached to have the chamber recall the invitations.

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C. F. W. [Signature]

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Mr. Tolson _____
 Mr. Nichols _____
 Mr. Boardman _____
 Mr. Belmont _____
 Mr. Mohr _____
 Mr. Parsons _____
 Mr. Rosen _____
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 Mr. Nease _____
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 Mr. Holloman _____
 Miss Gandy _____

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(INVITATIONS)

REP. THOMAS L. ASHLEY (D-O.) ACCUSED GOV. THOMAS B. STANLEY OF VIRGINIA OF DISTORTING AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC IDEALS BY WITHDRAWING INVITATIONS TO A STATE DINNER SENT TO TWO DISTINGUISHED NEGROES. ASHLEY MADE THE STATEMENT IN A LETTER TO STANLEY PROTESTING THE GOVERNOR'S ACTION.

STANLEY FORMALLY INVITED ELLA P. STEWART, PAST PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORED WOMEN, AND CHILAN B. POWELL, PUBLISHER OF THE AMSTERDAM NEWS, NEW YORK CITY, TO A "DISTINGUISHED VIRGINIANS" DINNER. STANLEY LATER WITHDREW THE INVITATIONS.

ASHLEY CALLED THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE INVITATIONS "SHOCKING." "IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE A MORE GROTESQUE DISTORTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC IDEALS WHICH WERE FOSTERED AND FOUGHT FOR BY SO MANY GREAT VIRGINIANS IN THE PAST," ASHLEY WROTE. MRS. STEWART LIVES IN TOLEDO, OHIO, WHICH ASHLEY REPRESENTS IN CONGRESS.

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WASHINGTON CITY NEWS SERVICE

Another Negro Says He'll Attend Virginia Dinner

RICHMOND, Va., April 16 (AP).—A third Virginia-born Negro has received an invitation to a dinner party at a hotel here May 17 and says he will attend unless his invitation is withdrawn by Governor Stanley.

St. Clair Drake, professor of sociology and anthropology at Roosevelt University, Chicago, sent a copy of his acceptance to the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

It said that he assumed "despite published statements by the president of the Chamber of Commerce that invitations to Negroes are being withdrawn, that the Commonwealth of Virginia which also invited me does not share these sentiments."

When it was discovered last week that two previous invitations had been sent to Negroes, the chamber president, Frank A. Ernst, said their names had been included by mistake and that their invitations were being withdrawn. He said yesterday Mr. Drake's invitation would also be withdrawn.

Dr. Powell to Attend

One of those invited was Dr. Clifton B. Powell, a physician and publisher of the Amsterdam News in Harlem. He had accepted the invitation, and said he planned to attend unless the invitation was personally withdrawn by Gov. Stanley.

The other invitation went to Mrs. Ella Phillips Stewart of Toledo, Ohio, who said last Saturday she does not plan to attend.

The May 17 affair is to be held in connection with the 350th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. A potential invitation list of some 700 names of Virginians who now live elsewhere was pared down to some 600. The chamber said names of more than 100 white and Negro Virginia natives were stricken for various reasons, including race and political beliefs.

Stresses Tradition

Mr. Drake, educated at Booker T. Washington High School in Staunton and at Hampton Institute, in his letter of acceptance said the invitation to him "expresses the continuity of the great liberal tradition of our own Thomas Jefferson."

He said he always remembers "with pride that I am a Virginian, and that Negroes played a significant part in the making of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown."

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Richmond Paper Opposes Ban on Invited Negroes

RICHMOND, Va., April 16 (AP). —The Richmond Times-Dispatch suggested editorially today that "both white and colored" should be invited to any dinner for eminent Virginians, now living outside the State.

In referring to the fact that three Virginia-born Negroes have received invitations to a State Chamber of Commerce dinner here May 17, the editorial said their inclusion "would be in the Virginia tradition of hospitality and interracial amity, and would evidence the desire of white Virginians to pay tribute to their colored fellow citizens who have left the State and made their mark."

"It appears that... two native Virginians intend to come, unless the Governor himself tells them not to," the editorial said.

"We have, then, the prospect of an extremely embarrassing situation here on the night of May 17, unless there is a quick backtrack on the part of the chamber, and unless these colored Virginians are told to come to the dinner to which they were invited."

"Wholly aside from this, it is entirely possible that one or more other Negroes who may have been sent invitations inadvertently by the chamber will also appear, bearing their invitations and asking to be admitted."

The editorial said if any such Negroes were refused admission "Virginia and Virginia hospitality will get a black eye from which they may never recover." They are pointed out as distinguished natives of Virginia, the editorial said, and should be included in the dinner. "In urging that these colored Virginians, and any others of

sufficient distinction now living in other States, be invited to the dinner next month, the Times-Dispatch is not lessening in the slightest its opposition in integration, particularly integration in the public schools. . . .

"But the homecoming dinner raises an entirely different issue — not an issue of law at all, but one of propriety and decency."

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